

Borough of Lewes.

Report of the Medical Officer of Health, 1896.

TO THE CORPORATION OF THE BOROUGH OF LEWES.

GENTLEMEN,

In producing my Report as Medical Officer of Health, for the year ending December 31st, 1896, I regret that I am unable to give as satisfactory a death rate as in that of former years, principally through a severe epidemic of Measles during the summer months, which unfortunately caused sixteen deaths. Had the town not suffered in this respect, the rate would have been lower than that for many years past, and even now, I think, you will find it comparing most favourably with that of many other towns.

DEATHS.—The Deaths notified during the year have been 165, and, I would add, this includes every death that has taken place in the town. By this means I think we obtain a more correct average, than by excluding those who are non-resident; and it must not be forgotten there are residents who die away, and of whose deaths it is difficult to obtain correct information.

As reported, the

First quarter	gave an average of	15.2	per 1000.
Second	"	13.6	"
Third	"	16.7	"
Fourth	"	14.0	"
or an annual rate of 14.9 per 1000.			

Of the various Parishes and Institutions in

St. John's	there were	42	deaths, under 1 year	16,	over 65	8
St. Ann's	"	24	"	"	4	10
All Saints'	"	31	"	"	2	10
St. Michael's	"	7	"	"	1	5
Cliffe	"	24	"	"	3	7
Southover	"	15	"	"	2	6
Southmalling	"	4	"	"	1	2
Workhouse	"	10	"	"	0	5
Gaol	"	1	"	"	0	0
Infirmary	"	7	"	"	1	0

Of total number

Thirty deaths occurred under one year of age.
Twenty-three at one year and under five.
Five at five and under fifteen.
Seven at fifteen and under twenty-five.
Forty-seven at twenty-five and under sixty-five.
Fifty-three at sixty-five and upwards.

Membranous Croup	...	caused 1 death.
Measles	...	" 16 "
Diarrhoea and Dysentery	...	" 1 "
Phthisis	...	" 10 "
Bronchitis, Pneumonia and Pleurisy	...	" 19 "
Heart Disease	...	" 22 "
Injuries	...	" 2 "
All other Diseases	...	" 94 "

With the exception of the Measles, the above figures call for little or no comment. It is gratifying to notice the deaths from Phthisis are decreasing, and that there has been no death from any Infectious Notifiable Disease.

MEASLES.—Regarding this epidemic, a special report was made at the request of the Local Government Board, and brought before your notice. The disease not being a Notifiable one, there were undoubtedly a great number of cases before one's attention was drawn to the matter, and it was only by means of enquiries at the various Schools (the managers to whom I feel indebted for their kindness in giving every information) that one could really gauge the extent of the epidemic.

I fear, unfortunately, that in this, as well as in other towns, the dangerous character of the disease are not known, and medical assistance often sought when too late.

In England and Wales there are close on 13,000 deaths annually from this disease, and if parents would remember that the three or four days previous to the development of the rash is a most infectious stage; that perfect isolation is as essential in this as in other contagious diseases, and that it is imperative that every attention as regards the prevention of exposure to cold should be paid, I think there would be every chance of preventing the spreading of the disease to such an alarming extent as that which we have recently experienced.

I felt it necessary, not agreeing with compulsory notification, as I think that such a procedure would render but little assistance, to suggest that pamphlets should be printed and handed to the various School Managers, to ascertain (and I am not referring alone to measles, but such complaints as chicken-pox and whooping cough) any absentees that may be away on account of these diseases, and also that leaflets should be left at the houses where such diseases occur, with instructions regarding isolation, &c. Your Sanitary Committee consented to such an arrangement, and I will see that such papers are distributed throughout the year.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.—Twenty-four cases of Infectious Disease have been reported :—

Diphtheria,	six.
Scarlet Fever,	eight.
Typhoid Fever,	eight.
Erysipelas,	two.

In all these cases attempts have been made as in former years to trace their origin; some no doubt have been imported, whilst with others (as is not unusual) it has been utterly impossible to ascribe any cause for the outbreak. With regard to the Typhoid Fever, I regret having to report that four cases occurred in one house; this is such an unusual occurrence, more particularly when disinfectants are supplied freely by the Town, that I felt it necessary to make special enquiries, and after excluding the drainage, water and milk supplies, there could be no doubt that proper attention was not given to the disinfection of the excreta and soiled linen.

Had the first case been sent, as was advised, to our Isolation Hospital, those interested would have been spared anxiety and expense.

INFECTIOUS HOSPITAL.—Two cases of diphtheria have been admitted to this institution, and I regret the benefits afforded by the hospital are not recognised as they should be. A Thresh's disinfecting apparatus will be placed there shortly, and I feel sure will be a great boon not only to the inhabitants of the town, but also those of the neighbouring districts.

For some time I have felt that arrangements should be made for extra nursing; by this I mean that if possible, we should secure the services of a specially trained and qualified person. It is by adopting such measures that we can only hope to secure the confidence of the public, and I hope (as the subject has been mentioned to the Hospital Committee) that I may be enabled to report that a satisfactory arrangement has been come to, and that with free admission to the poor, moderate charges to those who can afford to pay, and the privilege, as now adopted, of the services of the family medical attendant, the public will recognise the many advantages that can be obtained.

BIRTHS.—Two hundred and fifty-three births have been registered :—

Males,	118
Females,	135
giving an average of 23 per 1,000.	

DRAINAGE.—The very important matter of the Cliffe drainage has on several occasions been brought before the notice of your Sanitary Committee. A special report by Mr. Baldwin Latham has been received on the subject. Your Committee are well alive to the importance and necessity of such work, and will, I am sure, give their serious attention in the future, as they have in the past, to the carrying out of that which will be so beneficial to this part of the town, and which will be a great step towards the completion of the drainage of the entire district. Amongst many matters pertaining to drainage which have been successfully carried out during the year, I am indebted to our Borough Surveyor for the following information :—

Pin Well Road, new 15-inch sewer completed. Sewer vent shaft erected at head of sewer in Spring Gardens, Southover. Flush pipes put in for flushing sewers in Albion Street.

Davey's Lane and Tan Yard ditches cleansed. Flush pipes put in for flushing sewers in Fisher Street.

The whole of the public sewer vent shafts in the Borough have been inspected by the Surveyor; many were found to be ineffective owing to being rusted up the foot, but in each case, such work was done that will obviate such a rusting up in future. All are now in thorough working order.

The state of Davey's Lane ditch has been very much altered, the sewer overflow into it having been removed to a point close to the river; and the Southdown Brewery having disconnected from ditch to sewer, the ditch is now quite clean.

Winterbourne Stream has been cleansed. Flush pipes put in and a ventilating shaft put up at the top end of Little East Street sewer.

New sewer vent shaft erected in lieu of old one (cracked) on old Market Tower.

FLUSHING OF SEWERS.—Regular attention has been paid to the flushing of sewers, automatic flush tanks erected where necessary and disinfectants freely used. For disinfecting purposes, Izal is employed, and for fumigating, the sulphur dioxide gas.

TOWN REFUSE.—The town refuse is removed by contract, and every endeavour has been made during the year to introduce sanitary bins in place of the old, and often far too large, ash pits. The effort has met with considerable success, and the facilities for removal, and the necessity of more frequently emptying, will be appreciated. Last year I recommended that covered carts should be obtained, so that the offensiveness of carting such rubbish unprotected through the streets might be lessened. The suggestion met with the approval of the Sanitary Committee, and it would be interesting to know the reason for its not being carried out. Ample opportunities are daily afforded in the streets for witnessing the necessity for such an arrangement.

DAIRIES, COW-STALLS, AND PIGGERIES.—The dairies have been regularly visited and found satisfactory. Considerable attention has been given to the cow-stalls and piggeries, many of them not complying with the bye-laws in providing covered receptacles for the manure. There can be no doubt as to the necessity of these bye-laws being enforced, and I think the Sanitary Committee are to be congratulated on the steps they have taken in the matter.

SLAUGHTER HOUSES.—I have no complaint to make regarding these premises. The owners recognise the necessity of strict cleanliness and the free use of disinfectants. All are freely supplied with water, and attention paid to the early removal of offal and other refuse.

LODGING HOUSES.—These houses are kept in a satisfactory manner, the occupier of each has had his or her attention drawn to the bye-laws respecting the same, and the necessity of complying with them.

MORTUARY.—The unsatisfactory condition of the Mortuary was brought before the notice of the Sanitary Committee, and it was decided to have the place thoroughly renovated and more facilities afforded for the proper carrying out of the operations which have to be performed there. I must express my regret that the Committee could not see their way clear to carry out my suggestions, viz., that there should be waiting-room accommodation. In a special report I mentioned the advantages such a place would afford.

BAKE HOUSES.—I have to report as favourably of these establishments as in former years. On each visit I have noticed attention has been paid to the whitewashing and the prevention of dust accumulating. Plans for a new house have been submitted, and, complying with the Act, were approved.

WATER SUPPLY.—Our water supply, both regarding quality and quantity, is most satisfactory. The average daily quantity consumed is thirty gallons, and the Manager of the Works informs me that the town water has been laid on to 39 houses and 43 w.c.'s. I have paid considerable attention to the town wells, several analyses of the water have been made, necessitating the closing of three of them.

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT.—No sample has been submitted for analysis under this Act.

POLLUTION OF STREAMS.—Attention has been drawn to the pollution of a stream at the back of Brook Street, such pollution arising from the overflow pipe of the Brook Street sewer. The matter has been duly considered and the Borough Surveyor instructed to take steps for the remedying of the same.

SWIMMING BATHS.—On each visit I have found the arrangements made for the convenience of the public in every way satisfactory.

OVERCROWDING.—One case of overcrowding has been reported, and the matter satisfactorily arranged by the removal of two members of the family.

WORK DONE DURING THE YEAR.—Regular inspections have been made of the dairies, cow stalls, slaughterhouses, lodging-houses, baths and bakeries. House to house inspection has been made of several streets, and from my diary I find attention has been personally given to sanitary matters in the following places :—Sun Street, Bouverie Street, South Street, New Street, Westgate Street (six houses), St. John's Hill, High Street, St. Michael's, High Street, All Saints', James Street, Southover (14 houses), Green Wall, High Street, St. Ann's, Pattenden's Cottages (33 houses), Rusbridge's Cottages (5 houses), Wallands Park, Malling Schools, North Street, Priory Street, Southdown Villas, Parochial Schools, on several occasions, St. Andrew's Lane, 195, High Street, North Court, Cliffe; 107, 109, 111, Malling Street; 21, 22, 23, Lancaster Street; 8, Grange Road; Stables St. Ann's Rectory; Spring Gardens, St. John's; Mount Street, Southover; Neville Road, St. Anns; 15, St. John Terrace, and Brook Street.

INSPECTOR'S REPORT.—Inspector of Nuisances summary of work done during the year ending December 31st :—

The drains of seventy-four houses have been connected to main sewer, also drain from Infants' School, Southover.

The drains of eighteen houses have been cleared and repaired.

The drains of nine houses have been taken up and re-laid.

Six closets have been repaired and put in order.

Fourteen closets have been built to old houses.

Eight new dustbins have been provided.

A case of overcrowding occurred at Brook Street. Notice was served on agent, and the overcrowding remedied.

No. 4, Cliffe Square was found to be in a very dirty state. Notice served on agent, and tenant got rid of.

An application was received to store milk in Brook Street, this was refused as the proposed place for storage was close to pig-pounds.

House to house inspection has been made in Walwer's Lane, St. Nicholas' Lane, North Street, New Road, White Hill, Sun Street, Mount Pleasant, St. John Street, Garden Street, Eastport Lane, North Court, Foundry Lane, Cliffe Square, Thomas Street, Chapel Hill, Edward Street, and Flint Row.

The Davey's Lane and Tan Yard ditches have been cleaned out.

Disinfecting of premises has been carried out as required.

The lodging and slaughter houses have been regularly inspected.

Notices have been served on the occupiers of the whole of the piggeries in Brook Street, and the piggeries in Kingston Road, also on occupiers of cow-stalls within the Borough to provide proper receptacles for the manure. Four such receptacles have been built, and the matter is still in hand.

Water has been laid on to 39 houses and to 43 w.c.'s.

In concluding this report I would again thank the Medical Men of the town for their promptness in notifying any infectious disease, as also the Corporation officials, who have on many occasions rendered valuable assistance.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient Servant,

JOHN P. PEARCE,

Medical Officer of Health.